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THE PUBLIC AND SOCIAL DUTIES  
OF THE  
COLLEGE GRADUATE.

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AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE ALUMNI OF BROWN UNIVERSITY,

AT

COMMENCEMENT. 1880,

BY THE

HON. EDWARD L. PIERCE.



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# ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

ALUMNI OF BROWN UNIVERSITY,

TUESDAY, JUNE 15, 1880,

BY

HON. EDWARD L. PIERCE.  
1881

# POEM

BY

REV. S. F. SMITH., D. D.



PROVIDENCE:

SIDNEY S. RIDER.

1880.

At a meeting of the Alumni of Brown University, held in the Chapel of Manning Hall on Tuesday, June 15, 1880, it was

*Voted*, That the thanks of this Association be tendered to the Hon. EDWARD L. PIERCE for the able, eloquent, and appropriate Address delivered by him before the Alumni this day; also to the Rev. SAMUEL F. SMITH, D.D , for his excellent poem; and that the Secretary be directed to request copies of the same for publication.

Attest :—

REUBEN A. GUILD,

*Secretary.*

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## A D D R E S S .



This is the festival season of culture. On these fair days of June scholars come as pilgrims to seats of learning, and youths go forth from them to assume the duties and responsibilities of men. Few spectacles in human life attract sympathies so genuine and universal. If our hearts are rightly attuned we cannot fail to enter into the spirit of occasions in which worldliness yields to primal instincts. The traveller, in a foreign city, pauses by the wayside as teachers and pupils celebrate some holiday with songs and banners, or children in white array go to their first communion, or bride and bridegroom, with the loving escort of kinsfolk and neighbors, enter the cathedral to receive the consecration of their vows. Speaking another language, and kneeling at other altars, they are for the time of his kindred and family, and he blesses them with a stranger's benediction.

In a like scene, to which all hearts are responsive, we have met again to participate. Nearly three-score young men, equipped for active life, go forth from the University to enter on the work which God shall appoint unto each to do. Father, mother, sister, brother, are to rejoice in the growing promise of one on whom their hope has centred. The ingenuous youth himself is to see visions of the future as it offers duties, honors, rewards. We as spectators, in sober thought, shall contemplate the possibilities of each as he comes upon this platform where once we have stood, and shall ask what will he do with the training, the acquirements, and the inspiration of his college life ?

I esteem it a privilege to stand before you to-day, looking into the faces of early companions ; in a church where holy men, no longer in mortal flesh, my guides and friends,—Granger, Wayland, Caswell,—still speak in their remembered ministrations ; in a city beautiful for situation, to which I am bound by ties far tenderer than those of any academic fellowship ; and, what most concerns the hour, in the presence of young men who are passing from the seclusion of the college to the activities of the world. You will not be vexed this morning with any old question of literature or history, or with any speculations of science ; but the occasion in which we join, and the period in which we live, shall suggest my theme : —



THE PUBLIC AND SOCIAL DUTIES OF THE COLLEGE  
GRADUATE.

It would add to the value of our statistical tables if they informed us with substantial accuracy how many students are now in institutions which may fairly be called colleges according to the American standard, and how many receive degrees from them each year; what is the total number of such graduates in the country, and how they are distributed among the various professions; but however unsatisfactory the attainable figures may be, all will agree that the college graduates living at any period ought to be a prodigious force in the direction of public opinion.

Without refining upon the purpose of the college curriculum, it is enough to say that it is arranged primarily for the discipline of the whole man, his intellectual and his moral nature; and secondarily for the acquisition of the elements of knowledge in as many departments as time permits, so that thereafter, by himself or under specialists, the student may pursue any one according to his taste and aptitude. It puts in complete working order the noblest machine in the universe, and starts it off to become the greatest of dynamic agencies for good or for evil. With it ought to come a clear perception of truth in the various human relations, and a facility for impressing that truth on others. The studies

are not confined to one specialty or group, but are comprehensive. They deal with the intellectual and moral nature, with the best thoughts of antiquity, with the material world, with what is taught by science in its manifold divisions, and with what has transpired in human history. If one study followed exclusively tends to disturb a normal development, this curriculum, so broad and inclusive, awakens the whole soul, and teaches truth not as an absolute entity alone, but in its many relations. This is what Milton describes when he says: "I call, therefore, a complete and generous education that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war."

The College does more than train faculties and teach elements. This may be done under private tutorship or in a lecture-room, without association among students, or between students and professors. The College is a *society*. It is a society founded for a noble purpose, rich in the implements of culture, hallowed by the devotion of its benefactors, glorious often by what it has done for mankind. As such a society, it forms, directs, and inspires its successive generations of students.

The college student is for four years set apart from mankind. He is here at a period when the soul is sensitive to all impressions, when the character takes its direction. He comes as a boy: he leaves as a man.

The world he enters is unlike that which for a time has closed to him. They have points of comparison, but their points of contrast are many and striking. Outside is the conflict of material interests, the classification of men with reference to wealth or worldly success, the subordination of the better impulses to the lower, the pressure of expediency against duty, the assertion and practice of a conventional morality in politics and trade, which sneers at the highest rectitude as sentimental and pharisaic. There, too, are the fierce competitions for place, the war cries of parties which no longer signify living issues, and the fever of speculation, with its curious periodicity of return.

From all this the college student is withdrawn. He is indeed born and remains with like passions as the rest of us, but his time has not yet come. If the noise without reaches him, he is undisturbed, for he listens rather to the calm voices of teachers and books. If, from his chamber window, he has a glimpse of human activities, he sees them only as spectator and critic. If public journals and partisans condone corruption and duplicity in high places, or are subservient to clamor, or are always dinning in our ears that it is the highest duty of a citizen to sustain party nominations however objectionable, he turns for instruction to moralists like Wayland, and to publicists like Lieber and Woolsey. Whatever outlook he may have, he is in personal interest and activity isolated from the world beyond. His

stand is at a point where all finer influences meet. He is of a commonwealth typical in some respects of the outer life, but separate and apart from it. He lives in a community where knowledge is the pursuit of all; where the atmosphere is charged with an inspiring and vitalizing force; where rank among his fellows depends not on birth or wealth, but on generosity, true manliness, and achievements of intellectual power; where pretension and genuine character are readily and almost always justly assorted; where his immediate exemplars are students already distinguished by promise and attainment, and professors of finished culture and unworldly lives. He holds converse all the while with the great masters of thought in every age, and in their presence discerns what is transient and what is enduring. With each visit to the library, he sees at every turn of the eye what names live and what soon perish. He tests in the class-room and in the solitude of his study the relations of things by eternal standards; and there he learns from constant iteration and reflection the supreme value of the individual soul, surviving societies, institutions, governments,—its right of private judgment superior to the authority of Church and State; its perpetual obligations to truth and duty with no exceptions for exigencies and crises, personal or public. Moral philosophy teaches the supremacy of conscience; mental philosophy affirms the right to think for one's self as the foundation of intellectual life; and history

teaches how posterity reserves its garlands for those only who maintained in lives of thought or action the courage of their convictions. The College, then, in all her nurture, from the hour when she calls the youth to herself to the hour when she bids him go forth to his work, helps him to see truth as it is, to live it among men, and to maintain a vigorous personality in the strong currents of society.

This individuality, which is essential to manhood and to all good work in the world, is not to be confounded with self-assertion, irreverence, or eccentricity;—opposite vices which college discipline tends to counteract. The true scholar is in a sense the citizen of all nations, the contemporary of all ages. He has an open ear for the according voices of his own generation, and for the wisdom of the past. In his own judgments he will take account of the *consensus* of living men, and respect custom and tradition.

“ Well speed thy mission, bold Iconoclast!  
 Yet all unworthy of its trust thou art,  
 If with dry eye and cold, unloving heart,  
 Thou tread'st the solemn Pantheon of the Past,  
 By the great Future's dazzling hope made blind  
 To all the beauty, power, and truth behind.”

What place, then, is so adapted as the College to form and solidify a manly character, to promote fearless inquiry and independent conviction, to encourage the pursuit of lofty ideals, to put in true perspective all the

prizes of ambition? Where else shall we send the youth of our country with equal hope that they will come forth to be contented with moderate gains in the midst of speculation; to live frugally in the midst of extravagance; to assert the right of private judgment against authority; to carry a clear head and a strong will in all periods of frenzy and delusion; and to plant a firm foot against organized bodies which would usurp individual responsibility? I answer with confidence, that there is no such school of manhood as the College. Thousands may fail to learn the lesson, to realize the ideal; but they, not the College, are at fault. So true is it what Wordsworth says, that it is

“ — the most difficult of tasks to *keep*  
Heights which the soul is competent to gain.”

Nor does the power of the College over us end when our names drop from its annual catalogue. Each one remains accountable to teachers and classmates and contemporary students, and he never can escape from their moral jurisdiction. Can any one of that famous class of 1829 at Cambridge, which enrolls men preëminent in science, literature, jurisprudence, and theology, —and among them the author of “My country, ’tis of thee,” who to-day serves us as poet,—ever emancipate himself from the dominion of such a fellowship? Can a pupil of Wayland, Hopkins, Porter, Robinson, when meditating an act of meanness or dishonor, fail to hear the

upbraiding voice of the good President, living or dead, at whose feet he was nurtured? Can I, when a choice of conduct is before me, one offering the rewards of duty and the other worldly temptations, be blind to the presence of my college teachers, four of whom survive,<sup>1</sup> —three living in Providence, and one, my cherished friend from college days, the Latin professor, who is still at his ancient post? And shall I not then also see about me as witnesses and judges, contemporary students of my own and other classes, — my classmate and chum,<sup>2</sup> who, after faithful service in a metropolitan pulpit, now holds a chair at Princeton; an alumnus of an earlier class,<sup>3</sup> now a Professor at Yale, whose treatment of Christian history at its beginning and in later times has done so much to establish an intelligent faith; an alumnus of a later class,<sup>4</sup> distinguished by his culture and historical studies, now the Professor of History in this college; two members of another class,—one,<sup>5</sup> the President of Michigan University, who has recently been appointed the chief of an embassy to China, sent to adjust the relation of that Oriental Power with Western civilization; and the other,<sup>6</sup> by whose immediate invitation I am here to-day, a civilian honored for many years with an important trust from the national government, and a soldier who signalized his patriotism

1. Professors Chace, Gammell, Lincoln, Boise.

2. Rev. James O. Murray.

3. Rev. George P. Fisher.

4. Rev. J. Lewis Diman.

5. Hon. James B. Angell.

6. Gen. A. B. Underwood.



on fields of battle, and whose person bears the perpetual seal of his heroism amid the blazing columns of Wauhatchie ?

Will it be said that I have given an ideal picture of what the College ought to do for a man, rather than a statement of what it does ? I answer, No ! Wherever public spirit, loyalty to conviction, resistance to clamor, perseverance in good causes amid discouragements, the patient endurance of hardships, and courage without fear of death have been manifested, there the college graduate has been conspicuous. You will find him at the missionary station most remote from civilization, careless of discomforts, facing even martyrdom,—as witness the career of John Coleridge Patteson, a student and fellow at Oxford, uniting in his blood and name two families distinguished in the judicial history of England. In our civil war no class gave a readier response to the summons of patriotism than college men ; none were more quick to enroll themselves in the military service than the students and younger members of the alumni. Their proportionate contribution was, according to statistics collected with care, larger than that made by the public generally. The New England colleges sent nearly a quarter of their students and graduates of military age into the service. In some colleges of Pennsylvania and the West the Commencement was given up, the whole graduating class having



volunteered. Oberlin is said to have sent seven hundred of her students and alumni to the field, of whom one hundred gave their lives. But what the college men did for their country in that hour of peril cannot be measured by numbers alone. The example of each was in itself a power, a reinforcement. That nation is safe when its highest and best are foremost in self-abnegation. Who could look on their manly forms, often more beautiful than that which ancient art chiselled in the Antinous — their eyes beaming with intelligence and lofty spirit; who could see them leaving homes of refinement and opening careers to undergo the hardships of camp and march, to suffer weary months in hospitals and die on battlefields,—who could behold that spectacle, and not feel assured that all would be well with a country whose educated youth were such as these? Where in ancient or modern times have there been sublimer scenes than were witnessed after the war on commemorative occasions at our colleges, when, amid battle flags and trophies and shields bearing the names of the fallen, scarred veterans were received, not with a Roman, but with a Christian triumph? Is there in ours, or any land, a more impressive structure than the Memorial Hall at Cambridge, on whose walls Harvard has carved with classic tributes the names of her patriot dead? Where in ages to come shall mankind turn for more inspiring examples than are found in the volumes in which the colleges have

preserved with loving care the heroism of their sons? If it shall be said that culture alienates from common interests and sympathies; that the College, while it drills the intellect and gives an æsthetic direction to the faculties, fails to ennoble character,—our civil war with its histories, its biographies, and its monuments will be a final answer.

If the College has done less than it should have for the improvement of American politics, it has in eminent examples shown what it can accomplish in that direction. The active participation, within the last few years, of young men, largely recent graduates of colleges, in the movement to purify and improve civil administration, and to test public men by severer standards than before, is the most hopeful sign of contemporary politics. As typical of this class I mention Henry Armitt Brown, of Philadelphia, whose beautiful life and character Professor Hoppin has put in a volume destined, I trust, to assist in moulding generations of young men. A student at Yale, he was a true collegian, fair in scholarship, a diligent reader, preserving his purity, active in college sports, always foremost in song, poem, and speech. Qualifying himself for the bar, and enriching his culture with foreign travel, he entered on active life with a serious purpose. He cultivated the art of public speaking, and pursued the studies which are combined in all finished statesmen, —history, the classics, the masterpieces of great ora-

tors, public law, political economy, and the industrial and social questions of the time. The civil war and the period of reconstruction had passed when he took his place on the platform, but he found field enough for his powers. He assailed corruption in municipal government, entered actively into political campaigns, addressing immense audiences, and pleading always for higher policies in finance and civil administration. He came to the platform at the centennial epoch, and in orations upon our early and revolutionary history he was accurate in details, picturesque in narrative, elevating in tone, solemn in purpose. Compare him with the public men who now hold or for many years have held the foremost places in his State, and it is refreshing to see what this gifted young man had simply as a citizen accomplished at thirty-three.

The training of the College imposes duties various and comprehensive. Culture must not end in itself; if it does, it becomes that "fugitive and cloistered virtue" which Milton refused to praise. In order to deserve divine approval and win human favor, it must not live apart from men, contemplating its own beauty and perfection. It must diffuse sweetness and light as well as have them. The scholar's sphere will always be larger than himself, his family, and his business. He is a patriot; and he will strive to purify public life, to ennoble the national spirit. He is a townsman;

and he will take part in efforts to promote public education and health, honesty and economy in municipal administration; and he will not think it beneath his dignity to serve in any official capacity,—selectman, overseer of the poor, or member of the school committee. He is a neighbor; and he will without pretension diffuse about him by example and word the spirit and knowledge with which the College has endowed him. He will take time for conversation, for personal intercourse with all sorts and conditions of men. The difference between communities as places in which to live and to hold real estate, depends often not so much on a fortunate site, and facilities of communication, as upon the quality of the prominent citizens who give the tone to its civic life.

The College will have a closer connection with the world, and will have a greater power over men when it ceases to be regarded chiefly as a preparatory school for what are called the learned professions. When its graduates are distributed among farmers, tradesmen, and mechanics, they will no longer appear to the generality as a sedentary class, reposing under grateful shades while the multitude are toiling in the heat, visionary while the rest are practical, a privileged body placed above the common lot. It is an auspicious sign that the stream which flows from the college is now spreading fertility into new fields. The alumnus is not only

a minister, lawyer, physician, teacher; he is also a civil engineer, manufacturer, merchant, farmer, artisan. Among the founders of a new town in Colorado a few years ago were twenty college men. A gentleman, once a professor of this college, and afterwards the manager of a large mining establishment in that State,<sup>1</sup> became by his public spirit its first citizen, and then its representative in the Senate of the United States.

I venture in this presence to suggest—what may seem heresy to some—that there is a tendency in our country to overvalue what is called “higher education,” at least as compared with certain homely virtues on which the family and society depend,—industry, contentment, fixedness in home and pursuit. Our high schools are multiplying the number of young men and women who turn from farm, mechanical, and domestic work, and apply for employment as clerks and scribes. The trained nurse, how hard to find! but copyists, what legions of them of both sexes are always waiting to serve you! Even our reform-schools press their inmates to a point of intellectual excitement so far above their moral development that upon their discharge they treat as beneath them farm or domestic drudgery. This tendency is more marked with us than in any other country. It exists, however, elsewhere, as in Greece, where the University is regarded by some as an obstacle to material progress. It results there in a

1. Hon. N. P. Hill.

dearth of men fitted for surveying, mining, road-making, bridge-building, and farming ; while there is a superfluous number of lawyers, doctors, and clerks, who, having no chance of a career, become idle, restless agitators. Are not the leaders in our educational movements responsible in some measure for that disgust with manual labor,—for that mischievous notion that it is a misfortune, even a dishonor, to have to work for one's living on the farm, in the factory, or in domestic service,—which underlies the dangerous movements of our time, and finally assails social order, as in the municipal elections of San Francisco and the riots of Pittsburg ? That civilization is not healthy which divorces the training of the intellect from the labor of the hands ; and that personal culture is defective in which these cunning fingers, these powerful muscles, these stalwart limbs are left altogether unexercised in productive industry. At least as a recreation manual labor helps to maintain the tone of the intellectual life, as eminent examples bear witness. Some of us remember Dr. Wayland, hoe in hand, crossing the college yard of a summer morning to work in his garden, near where the Memorial Hall now stands ; and the present British Prime Minister is said to be the best woodchopper in the three kingdoms.

The proportion of graduates whose inherited fortunes place them above the necessity of relying upon



their earnings for support has increased with the growing wealth of the country. It is not well for such to compete for clients and patrons in professions already overcrowded; but nevertheless they owe a large duty to society. They ought not, as too many of them do, to lead aimless lives, keeping apart from men, frequenting clubs, travelling in Europe, lounging at watering places, or, at the best, amateuring in art or books. As Lord Bacon has nobly said, "In the theatre of human life it is only for God and angels to be spectators." Society has many offices of beneficence which should be filled by men instructed in the best knowledge of their time, and placed by exceptional circumstances above the temptations which beset a struggling life. There is a vast amount of unremunerative work to be done,—for the relief of pauperism, the care of the public health, the support of education, the working of municipal government, the management of prisons and hospitals, the administration of charities and savings banks, the protection of the Indian, the freedman, and the emigrant; but when such honorable though gratuitous service is offered, it is too often declined by persons of elegant leisure, and finally falls upon more earnest men, already overworked in their professions. *Noblesse oblige* applies to all fortunate classes; and culture combined with wealth ought to do in a republic what it has been claimed aristocracy has done as a privileged order.

Educated men sometimes complain that a political career in this country is closed to a gentleman, and open only to men of coarse and pushing energy. If there be anything in this, they who complain are often in a measure responsible for the exclusion. No man has a right to expect the confidence and favor of constituencies until he has shown capacity for affairs and an active interest in the public welfare. An English writer, Mr. Frederic Harrison, has said that "the active exercise of politics requires common sense, sympathy, trust, resolution, and enthusiasm,—qualities which your man of culture has carefully rooted up, lest they damage the delicacy of his critical olfactories."

Here, then, in the spheres I have named, the way opens for educated men of wealth to careers of usefulness and honor. The transition from such beneficent service to public life is natural; but what if it does not take place? The best public work of our day is done outside of legislative bodies,—in thoughtful discussions by specialists, and by charitable, business, and scientific commissions, which mature conclusions and frame statutes. Lord Brougham in his final estimate of Canning mentions as his greatest defect that he had reasoned himself into the belief, which he was wont to profess, that no man can serve his country with effect out of office, as if there were no public, no forum, no press,—the most pernicious notion which, in his opinion, ever entered into the mind of a public man.



Our educated young men, who are placed above the necessity of constant service in a profession, may learn a lesson from English history. How is it that the English nobility has survived the wreck which has befallen similar orders elsewhere in Europe, so that it continues to furnish popular statesmen, and no candidate for the House of Commons so attracts constituencies as the son of a peer? It is because at all periods many of them have been distinguished by beneficent activities. They have not been idlers; they have written histories, translated the classics, cultivated science, trained themselves in the art of public speaking, led in movements for moral and physical amelioration, and have in some measure preserved the best idea of feudalism,—the duty which superior privilege owes to inferior fortune. They perform common labors, fill important trusts, and administer charities without compensation. They are represented in every unpaid parliamentary or social investigation, and they sit in local tribunals without salary or fees. Lord Wharncliffe, grandfather of the present peer, presided for more than thirty years at the Quarter Sessions in Sheffield, discharging the duty gratuitously and in a manner to distinguish himself among English magistrates. How many wealthy graduates of American colleges would be willing to serve without compensation as justices of the peace and police judges?

The relation of the college graduate to politics presses upon our attention to-day. Literary men have too much the habit of treating political duty in the spirit of triflers, and they have often only a smile, if not a sneer, for others who busy themselves to save the State from a disastrous policy or from unworthy public men. But can any conduct be more irrational? Politics is the science of government; it relates in one way or another to all that concerns organized society. And can there be any nobler pursuit? It is the theme and title of a treatise of Aristotle who ruled philosophy for eighteen centuries, and who did not think the subject unworthy of his thought. Mr. Gladstone has been a politician for fifty years, and where will you find a finer type of manhood than in him? You will indeed meet with ignoble passions in political parties; but you will meet with these in all human activities, even in religious movements. But however repelling some aspects of contemporary politics may be, the good citizen is bound to do his best to improve them; and the ampler his training and opportunities, the more peremptory is this obligation.

The college graduate should in his political action maintain the manly spirit which is the natural growth of his training; and this quality was never so much needed as now in American politics. The existence of political parties, and the divisions of citizens among them according to their opinions, interests, traditions,

or temperament, seem inseparable from a free commonwealth. Mr. Burke, in his "Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents," has stated with his accustomed force the duty of political association, and the unhappy and even unpatriotic position of "detached" gentlemen who hold themselves aloof from it. The duty of good men to associate when the bad combine; the necessity of organization for promoting any policy in government; the impotence of men who cultivate an austere individuality,—all this may be admitted. Some mode also for collecting the general sense of voters of the same party for the purpose of concert in the support of candidates by means of a preliminary conference or expressions of opinion, seems convenient and reasonable.

There are, however, existing conditions in American politics which require the citizen to watch jealously the limitations of party allegiance. A machine has been created, beginning with the primary meeting and ascending to State and national organizations, which becomes at times an intolerable tyranny. Adopting the scandalous war cry, "To the victors belong the spoils," it rules by addressing the lowest passions. The caucus, managed by experts, instead of expressing the popular sense is as likely to express only the command of some partisan chief. Two or three public men, with no records of meritorious service, by arts unworthy of statesmen and of honest men, are able to override the wishes

of the constituent body, and to defy the moral sense of the people. They are, in their field, stronger than churches, colleges, and public journals combined,—though at times foiled by some happy turn of events which gives to the party a candidate worthy, by his culture, his character, and his blameless record, of the honorable title of statesman. They set themselves against an improved civil service, and checkmate and thrust at a President who would make the reform “thorough, radical, and complete.” This system of dictation by unscrupulous partisan leaders, with a body of henchmen at their backs, is perverting our elections from a conflict of principles to a struggle of placemen; is destroying statesmanship and corrupting the sources of national life. Of this system at its start Dr. Von Holst, of Freiburg, has said in his recent review of our constitutional and political history, “From that hour this maxim [to the victors belong the spoils] has remained an inviolable principle of American politicians; and it is owing only to the astonishing vitality of the people of the United States, and to the altogether unsurpassed and unsurpassable favor of their natural conditions, that the State has not succumbed under the onerous burden of the curse.”

It is a hopeful sign that a new public spirit has arisen among the young men of the country—many of whom are college graduates—who are carrying their independent convictions into civil activities, and are demand-

ing with an emphasis which partisans are beginning to respect, that public life shall be fairly expressive of the intelligence, the moral sentiment, and the patriotism of the age.

No subject of national politics requires so much the attention of educated men to-day as the reconstruction of our civil service upon the principles of enlightened statesmanship. For the first forty years of our history under the Constitution that service depended on personal integrity and fitness, and not upon political opinion. But with President Jackson civil service and partisan service became synonymous, and so they have remained to this day. While in other respects the nation has made remarkable advances in methods of administration, in this its movement has been retrograde, and we have fallen far behind the progress of other civilized nations. The civil force is treated as a party force to be marshalled in elections, giving a portion of its time and of its compensation to keep one party in power, although the whole people is taxed to support it; and still more it is now treated as the working force of a dominant faction within one party, and of Senators who happen to enjoy Executive favor. Members of Congress assume as a right to open and shut the doors to the public service among their constituents, thus usurping the power which the Constitution has confided only to the President. This unconstitutional pretension has been maintained in recent times by a

remarkable innovation called "the courtesy of the Senate," according to which a Senator, objecting to a nomination for a post in his State for no other reason than that the nominee is not his man, is joined by Senators of his own party from other States, to whom he is expected to return like favors; and thus one branch of the government seeks to coerce another to surrender its unquestioned prerogative. So gross has this abuse become that Mr. Theodore Roosevelt, nominated as Collector of Customs for the port of New York,—a man of eminent character and fitness, beloved for his purity of life and noble charities,—was rejected simply because a Senator from his State required his rejection; and he received from Senators of his own party, according to common report, only the support of six, among whom were the Senators from Massachusetts and the junior Senator from Rhode Island. The Senator who demanded the rejection has been ambitious to display contempt for all efforts to put the civil service on an honorable footing, reminding us, by his sneers at the movement to reform it, of Sir Robert Walpole, who in coarse and cynical irony was accustomed to jeer at all who objected to the gross parliamentary corruption of his time as "patriots, saints, Spartans, boys."

Thus it has come to pass that the immense force of revenue officers, postmasters, marshals, and deputies, who are by law and every rational theory of government the servants of the whole public, have become



the servants of one party, and still more the servants of individual partisans. Fifty thousand or more office-holders, whose duties do not concern political opinion, are subject to dismissal with new administrations and new Senators. Witness the natural effect of all this on the tone of public life! On the one hand, the officer who ought to be the honorable representative of his government and people is degraded to be the subservient, parasitical agent of a partisan chief; and on the other, public men expect to hold their places, not by their services and principles, the policies they have upheld, the measures they have devised or carried, but by their skill in manipulating caucuses and maintaining a compact body of political dependents. How, under such a system, can self-respect and efficiency and character prevail in the civil service? How under such a training can there be honor, wisdom, magnanimity, and disinterested patriotism in statesmen?

This use of patronage for political purpose once existed in England. It was a part of Sir Robert Walpole's scheme of parliamentary corruption, and flourished later under Lord North. But the system weakened with the progress of reform, and at length, as the result of a movement beginning in 1853 and culminating in 1870, it was displaced by a system of merit and competition open to all,—to the sons of tradesmen and the sons of noblemen alike. The reform has had in its course the efficient support of eminent statesmen of

both parties as members of the ministry or of parliamentary commissions,—Aberdeen, Palmerston, Russell, Derby, Northcote, Sir Charles Trevelyan, Bright, and Lowe. Less than three months ago, in a new election which, after a contest exceeding in interest and passion our recent Presidential elections, reversed the foreign and domestic policy of the empire, of the fifty thousand persons in the civil service less than fifty, who necessarily were to represent the new policy, went out with Beaconsfield and came in with Gladstone.

The colleges of the country—its educated men—have it in their power to create a public opinion which shall insure the triumph of this reform and compel the retirement of public men who stand in its way. This is a measure of politics indeed; but it is also a work of patriotism, a movement of civilization.

In this connection and in this presence, one name above all others deserves mention,—that of a graduate of Brown University, a native and always a citizen of Rhode Island, the earliest, ablest, and most persistent advocate of civil-service reform in Congress. Without the support of party or any active force of public opinion, he embodied it in a bill and defended it in successive reports and speeches. He spoke like a statesman who looks far before and far behind him; and while others thought only of local interests and temporary issues, he devoted himself with his energy, his intellectual grasp, and his positive conviction to this enduring work of



statesmanship. When history shall record what this generation has done for the elevation of American politics, it will write in grateful characters the name of THOMAS ALLEN JENCKES.

The political education of the people, in a country governed by universal suffrage, will always be the duty of those who have had a special opportunity to study political subjects. In the recent financial contest in this country two facts appeared: First, that there was a great want of definite knowledge among the people on political and economical questions; and secondly, that everywhere there was a craving for information concerning them. Large audiences in agricultural and manufacturing districts would listen for hours to statements of the elementary laws of political economy, accompanied by detailed figures and illustrations. The spirit of antagonism to society, which in other countries breaks out in Communism and Nihilism, with us assumes the form of an attack on the currency. The crusade was made at a period of industrial depression, and was carried on with an extraordinary zeal, and with all the arts known to modern agitation. It became a powerful political force, decided elections, carried one branch of Congress, and well nigh involved us in financial ruin. The delusion was arrested by a combined effort which teaches a perpetual lesson. A few earnest men in the West organized an "Honest Money League;"

they distributed two hundred thousand pamphlets; they addressed the masses not only in populous centres, but sought remote villages and the farming populations, and in simple and effective statements exposed the mischievous sophistries which had been industriously spread. This movement, and kindred efforts of our public men,—notably those of Mr. Schurz and Mr. Garfield,—dissipated popular ignorance, and saved this nation from one of the worst calamities which ever threatened it. The educated man of earnest purpose and positive conviction can follow the communist, the inflationist, the enemy of social order, wherever he may go, confident that the masses will in the end heed the teachings of reason and experience.

Public speaking,—or the platform as it is called,—supplies an opportunity for the political education of the people in England and the United States, such as is found in no other countries. In Germany this mode of acting upon public opinion is not yet a habit, although it is likely to become such with the progress of the republican spirit. In France, where a more liberal system is now under consideration, the right to hold a public meeting for the discussion of political questions is not yet admitted, even by a government founded on universal suffrage. Such a meeting can be held only by a license from the Prefect of Police, rarely granted except during a period of ten days near an election of deputies, and it is denied altogether during the three

days immediately preceding the election. The police are conspicuously present, "assisting," as it is called, with power to close the session and arrest the speakers for language which they may deem offensive to the Government or tending to disturb the public peace. The English-speaking race submits to no such despotic restrictions. It maintains a platform where the speaker may say what he likes and the people may listen to what they like,—the police being present to protect, and not to prevent free speech. In the hour of public peril, in seasons when foreign or domestic questions press for solution,—whenever statesmen seek to direct their countrymen in the way of honor and safety, or the people to learn the lessons of wisdom,—you will see crowds moved by a common impulse, gathering in the open air, under spreading tents, or in town halls, court houses, or theatres, where orators and audiences have absolute freedom to speak and listen. No English or American municipality is deemed complete in its appointments which has not its spacious hall for popular assemblies, like those of Birmingham and Manchester, or those of Boston and Worcester. A people, which by right and habit maintains a free platform, needs for the maintenance of domestic order no standing army, no police espionage.

Surely one who has had the generous training of the College ought, except in rare cases of physical disability, to qualify himself for guiding public opinion in

this mode, which is sanctioned by the customs and traditions of the two kindred nations among whom liberty and order stand upon the surest foundations. There are indeed gifts of voice, manner, person, unction, which are born with the man and cannot be acquired,—such as have distinguished Whitefield, O'Connell, Kosuth, and Bright; but a genius for oratory is not essential to effective public speaking. Cobden did not have it, and yet no speaker has done so much in our time to change, direct, and concentrate political opinion. His style was simple, like conversation, and rejected all the glitter of rhetoric; but he went straight to the understanding, and carried conviction to audiences various in tastes and prejudices.

The style of public speaking in our country is changing for the better. Stately periods, studied gestures, and academic elaboration are less effective than formerly, and the sober sense of our time has become, as it ought to be, intolerant of turgid rhetoric and certain affectations of passion and patriotism which once drew rounds of applause; but the capacity to give to a popular assembly well-considered thoughts upon political and social themes was never a power so effective for good as it is to-day. The educated man cannot afford to dispense with it, least of all, as some do, to depreciate it. Of what avail is much of the college curriculum—the study of rhetoric, and logic, the writing of dissertations with infinite *labor limae*, the training in

elocution, the exercises in declamation, the debates of the societies, the parts on exhibition and commencement days,—if after one has painfully wrought the weapons for maintaining truth and assailing error before men, he is to lay them aside forever like rusty armor in an attic?

A condition of public speaking in England and the United States deserves mention,—and I delight here as always to join together two kindred nations who ought ever to act as one in movements of civilization, and whose common language and spirit are destined to a dominion wider and more enduring than those of any race. Elsewhere the orator addresses the self-interest, the instinct for equality, loyalty, love of glory, nationality; but with the English-speaking race the appeal to the moral sense has been most effective. So it was when this nation broke the fetters of four millions of slaves; and when the English people abolished slavery in the West Indies, and within a few weeks in the election of a new government declared that their arms and diplomacy should no longer be used to uphold Moslem barbarism and oppression in eastern Europe, or to wage aggressive warfare upon uncivilized races in Africa and Asia.

The scholar must not allow his superior attainments to isolate him from common sympathies. If he would help men, he must remain of them, and while he directs

them to “nobler modes of life, sweeter manners, purer laws,” taking always the best view of their conduct and purposes. The satirist may laugh at the follies of a degenerate age, but satire never arrested national decline. He may, like Pascal in the “Provincial Letters,” unmask the hypocrisy of some class or order, but his weapon serves no end when aimed at his generation. The cynic, with his contempt for mankind, will find that mankind has no ear for him. Men will accept as guide only him who comes to them with the tone and manner of a friend.

A certain class of scholars in our day and country—not a large one, it may be—appear to be pessimists in their reflections on public affairs. Their general views are excellent, but their cynical tone deprives them of the influence which justly belongs to their high character and their unquestioned patriotism. They see in public life only corruption and low ambition. They mourn over the failure of universal suffrage, instead of marking its evils and showing in what better way mankind may be governed. At literary festivals, in journals and magazines distinguished by finish of style and sharpness of wit, and in poems also, they lament the decline of national virtue, and can see nothing but Tweeds in politics and Fisks on the exchange. It is curious to note—and I trust the observation will not offend the sensibilities of any—that those who take this depressing view of human nature in our age and



country are conspicuously those who in religious belief cherish the hopeful theory of its development; while those who, following Augustine, treat human life as a probation, beginning with depravity and continuing in a mortal struggle with foes within and without, never seem to fail in courage whether contending with sin at home or civilizing savage races abroad. A profound religious conviction, narrow or uncultured though it be, is never cynical or pessimistic.

Never in human history,—never, certainly, in the history of our country,—has there been a time when it would be so irrational to lose faith in man as now. Everywhere there is work for the patriot, the scholar, and the Christian; but nowhere does he confront desperate evils. In religion, in politics, in the maintenance of every-day as well as of heroic virtues there is no decline.

Our age is not a superstitious one; hardly, in a technical sense, a religious one,—that is, in its interest in traditional points of controversy. It subordinates dogma to conduct; it mellows the old creeds or gives them a liberal construction,—but it is loyal to the substance of faith. One may indeed fasten on certain aspects of modern thought,—agnosticism, for instance,—and lament, as men have always lamented, the decay of faith; but his outlook would be narrow and partial. Life, if we compare the Sacred Record with our personal observation, is purer now than among the be-

lievers of Rome and Corinth who were converted by the direct ministrations of the Apostles. On the platform, in public journals and in social life, the Christian belief and its ministers were never treated with more genuine respect. Even Rationalists and Positivists confess the prudential argument for revealed religion and its beneficent power in the civilization and government of mankind. An English writer, who ranks as a Positivist, said to me last summer that it was the religious bodies which had saved the mining and manufacturing districts of England from barbarism. For half a century Mr. Emerson has been regarded by many good people as a very dangerous teacher, and yet not long ago, as an overseer of Harvard College, he gave his voice as well as his vote against dispensing with the compulsory attendance of students on the morning prayers; and some have thought they discovered in his later utterances on religion a definite departure from the pantheism which was ascribed to his earlier productions.

Our people have in recent history shown in their relation as citizens not only the finer and more subtile inspirations which rise and subside with heroic periods, but also the equally essential though less shining qualities on which constitutional government depends,—good sense, patience, moderation, tolerance of adverse opinion, the spirit of concession, tact in meeting new exigencies where the written law or precedents fail, and sobriety in the midst of circumstances which



move the depths of popular passion. The surrender of Mason and Slidell; the maintenance of peace with France when Louis Napoleon was scheming for intervention in our civil war (from which we were saved by the refusal of the British Cabinet), and was sending troops to Mexico to extend the dominion of the Latin race on this continent; the maintenance of peace with England when "Alabamas," built in her dockyards and issuing from her ports, were sweeping our commerce from the ocean,—these are signal instances of national self-control. What nation could more peacefully and fairly have settled the disputed succession to a throne than we settled the Presidential controversy of 1876 by its submission to a new tribunal of fifteen men in an emergency for which the Constitution had made no provision,—the award made by one majority, and one member afterwards stating that the case appeared so balanced that he first wrote opinions on both sides in order the better to present the opposite views to his own mind? And yet forty-five millions of people, without disturbance, without the resistance of a single citizen, without the arming of a single soldier, accepted as law and government a judgment rendered on so narrow an issue by the casting vote of one hesitating man!

We have lifted four millions of slaves to manhood and citizenship, men of another color and another race,—an achievement for which Tocqueville, abolitionist though he was, did not dare to hope; and we have

done it with less personal violence, less disturbance of industry, less friction of social forces than the most sanguine patriot imagined was possible. More recently a destructive theory of finance seemed to overcome the popular imagination, but we have seen the fanaticism arrested by appeals to sober reason.

And when heroic qualities have been needed, has this people been found wanting? In 1861 we appeared to foreign observers, even to many of ourselves, to be given up to materialism,—loving comfort, greedy of wealth, feeble in national spirit, lacking in personal courage, without faith in ourselves and our country; and foreign statesmen, even the best of them, with few exceptions, believed our dissolution was at hand. But when our people faced the dread questions, whether the country of Washington should be severed in twain, whether the Mississippi should flow through divided empires, whether slavery should be perpetual on this continent, whether the hope of the nations should be darkened, there rose a spirit from east to west,—from farm, work-shop, factory, college,—a spirit of self-sacrifice, patriotism, nationality, and devotion to liberty, which has won the admiration of mankind, and will move the souls of distant posterity as the stories of Leonidas, savior of Greece, and of William of Orange, savior of Holland, have swayed the departed generations.

Let us, then, my brethren, have faith in the suffrage

of the people, though it does not elect us ; in our country, though another party than our own should succeed ; in religion, though our particular sect dwindles ; in the human race, though it does not always behave as we would have it.

And now a final word to the young men who to-morrow are to receive their commissions from the University. You meet at the threshold of your career a period of great interest and activity, and with the opening of the twentieth century you will be in all the prime of manly power. There will be in your day, as in all days, ignorance to be overcome, delusions to be dispelled, low ambition to be withstood, noble causes to be advanced. Here then is your opportunity ; here also is your duty. Carry into the State and into the Church the liberal spirit of the College ; hold fast to the independent conviction which is born of your training ; maintain your individuality against combined masses. your right of private judgment against all aggressive force ; keep your heart warm and healthy by contact with the people ; have faith in the best instincts of living men and in the highest possibilities of your race. If the world's best things come to you, use them with moderation ; but if fame and fortune leave you uncrowned, you will deserve well of *Alma Mater* if you live brave, honest, simple lives, and all the ends you aim at be your country's, your God's, and truth's.



# POEM.

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## THE MYSTERY OF LIFE.

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O mystery of human life!  
O wondrous end of man!  
O theme with curious questions rife,  
With God's divinest plan,—  
Plan, which no human mind can reach,  
No human tongue can tell;  
Too deep for angel's thought or speech,  
Boundless, ineffable!

How doth the acorn, germinant,  
Become the mighty tree;  
How grows the infant spark of thought  
Broader than land and sea!  
The mighty oak its crumbling boughs  
Back to earth's bosom gives;  
But ages come, and ages pass,—  
Mind, still expanding, lives.

How man, with ever-lounging soul,  
Some fancied goal desires—  
Like toiling miners, sinking shafts  
Deep towards earth's central fires—

But leaves, unsought, life's highest good,  
 As bats ignore the sun—  
 And, grasping for the weak, the mean,  
 Misses the grand, the one.

Life scorns to yield its noblest fruit  
 To men of aimless ease;  
 No coral reef springs up, uncaused,  
 Above the deep, blue seas;  
 Work with thy might, O mortal man,  
 With worthy ends in view;  
 With soul and nerve, with heart and brain,  
 To God's high model true.

All wealth of faithful work is born.  
 All greatness won by toil,  
 E'en as the farmer's golden corn  
 Springs from the deep-worked soil;  
 Spoil not thy soul with nerveless aim,  
 With idle, weak desire;  
 Strive nobly for a noble name—  
 To all high deeds aspire.

As from the crucible the gold,  
 Tried by the fierce flame, flows—  
 As from the sculptor's dust and grime  
 The chiselled wonder grows—  
 So from earth's friction, toil and grief,  
 Bring beauty, love and truth,—  
 Garments of praise for ripened days,  
 The light and crown of youth.

On wealth intent, in wild pursuit,  
 O'er distant climes and isles,  
 The merchant drives, with eager haste,  
 And heap on heap he piles;

Like sand-hills on the wave-washed shore,  
 Like clouds of drifting spray,  
 Like mole-hills in the ploughman's path,  
 His treasures melt away.

Ambition mounts his fiery steeds,  
 Plumed, o'er new heights to soar;  
 And waves aloft his potent wand,  
 O'er subject sea and shore;  
 Nurse thy fair bubble, man of pride—  
 Thyself, thy mighty care;  
 Reach forth for other worlds to rule;  
 And grasp—but empty air.

The athlete struggles in the race,  
 The expected crown—his life—  
 Muscle and bone, and wrenching nerve  
 Tense with the mighty strife;  
 O bootless task, such wreath to win,  
 Triumph, alas, how brief!  
 His valor, nought but force of limb,  
 His crown—a fading leaf!

Proud of the flag that o'er him waves,  
 Of deeds his bravery wrought,  
 Of rights secured, of wrongs redrest,  
 Of battles grandly fought—  
 The warrior, with his sword unsheathed,  
 Cries "Victory! or death!"  
 How soon his vaunted glory pales—  
 Brief as a passing breath.

Scorched on the line, chilled at the pole,  
 Tossed on the billowy foam,  
 Ambition lures the explorer on,  
 With tireless zeal to roam;



Perchance he finds nor sea nor land,  
 But faith still onward leads—  
 The fame, the wealth, the rest he seeks,  
 False to his hope, recedes.

The gold that gilds the sunset cloud  
 Fades with the parting day;  
 The silver shimmer on the sea  
 At nightfall melts away;  
 And vain man's mortal hopes and aims,  
 So bright, but soon so dim,  
 Die, like the flashing lightning's gleams,  
 Above the horizon's rim.

New heights, new depths, of wealth unknown,  
 Wait the behest of thought;  
 As mines in countries unexplored,  
 Wait to be found and wrought;  
 The high, the grand, the true, the good,  
 These are man's fitting goal,—  
 God's jewels,—ore of priceless worth—  
 The ingots of the soul.

Then winnow grains of truth and love  
 From this world's useless straw;  
 Who rules his life, he rules the end—  
 'Tis nature's changeless law;  
 O blest the man, supremely blest,  
 Whose life sublimely flows;  
 For God's approving sentence sheds  
 A halo o'er its close.

O man, in God's own image made —  
 Born of God's highest thought,  
 O man, for nobler aims designed,  
 For nobler purpose wrought,—

Build not on time's illusive sands  
The pillar of thy fame;  
But high, on monuments unseen,  
Carve an immortal name.

What harvest fields of joy and hope  
Whiten the world's broad face;  
A sickle waits each willing hand,  
Each heart, God's helping grace;  
No seed is lost,—no precious grain  
To earth can, useless, fall:  
God guards the reapers and the seed,  
His love shall garner all.

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